

*Joistings 21***Research, Communications, Stages of Method**

This essay, written in early 2006, is, in its proximate meaning, related to the gathering of August 14-18, 2006, in the University of British Columbia, a gathering that seeks to reach larger light on two functional specialties that are seemingly neglected by Lonergan: research and communications.

The essay was, originally, much lengthier affair. I was pushing on, seeking refinements of foundational searchings. But the conference challenge is to get something going towards a beginning, and indeed my own challenge in these next few years is in line with that challenge. It does not seem a time for pushing forwards but, so to speak, for pushing round. So, this cuts back to the August project. But I kept the title, and keep also brief pointers that could help us along, even if they were part of the reach for a larger subtler view. Two brief sections, then: one on the broader view, the second on preparing for and benefitting from the conference. At the end of this essay, in an Appendix, I place the general invitation to the Conference which contains a short list of suggested topics and some details of our leisured style of procedure and our avoidance of formal reading of papers.

1. Three Definitions of Generalized Empirical Method.

First, a creative pointer here regarding the title, stages of method. Think of three views of generalized empirical method as associated with the three stages.¹ Basic spontaneous method is present from the beginning, the early methodologist being the human who has as yet not planted nor harvested not even found a shell convenient for gathering berries. In the first stage of meaning, in its generic purity, attention is on the

¹*Joistings 22* concludes to a fourth obvious view, but let us leave it simple here, in line with *Insight* and with foundational work.

object: there emerges empirical method, a spontaneity that can invent instruments of survival. It is unanalysed, but eventually it takes descriptive shape in a talk, a linguistic trick, that leaves out the source of that shaping. There is, then, talk of empirical method that has the characteristics of the later talk, a contemporary talk, indeed, that has its screening roots in truncated subjectivity.² From that sort of talk and thinking one can arrive at the expression of Lonergan in the third chapter of *Insight*: “We have followed the common view that empirical science is concerned with sensibly verifiable laws and expectations. If it is true that essentially **the same method could be applied to the data of consciousness**, then respect for ordinary usage would require that a method, which only in its essentials is the same, be **named generalized empirical method.**”³ This may be taken as a first definition of generalized empirical method.

Next comes Lonergan’s later definition of generalized empirical method, that should dominate these next centuries. It still does not seem to have much influence on Lonergan students.

“Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding operations of the subject; it does not treat of the subject’s operations without taking into account the corresponding objects.”⁴

The Third Definition of GEM is my suggestion, though you can find it lurking is

²You recall Lonergan’s comments on page 73 of *A Second Collection*? “The neglected subject does not know himself. The truncated subject not only does not know himself but also is unaware of his ignorance and so, in one way or another, concludes that what he does not know does not exist”.

³*Insight*, 72[96].

⁴Lonergan, *A Third Collection*, 141, top five lines.

some of Lonergan's writings: e.g. in "Mission and Spirit,"⁵ Or in his view of leisure as an emergent of a new economics.⁶

Generalized empirical method still operates within the second definition, but the focus is now on the roots of the operations of the subject, the loneliness that is the heart of history.

Should I leave at that, with the invitation to brood over the two shifts?

Let me see can I give some uncomplicated hints. But I would note that digging out the meaning of the two definitions is a matter of new research into history. So, one finds the third definition verified in a vague way in aesthetic reachings, in primitive poetic yearnings. On the other hand, one finds in the recent history of Lonergan studies a massive neglect - or dodging - of the second definition. Too many Lonergan pseudo-disciples incline to write of conscious operations, say, in physics or psychology, without venturing into the data of sense. Let me be extremely simple here: what data of sense do I wish to draw to your attention? Yes, of course, it is the data that physicists study, the data that psychologist study. But think now of the data that these people produce: print about physics and about psychology. What is being neglected is the mediation of an understanding of the operations that is being made available in history by the venture called the scientific revolution.

The third definition of GEM seeks to carry forward all that mediation of humanity's reach for explanation into a new culture of leisure and luminous loneliness. To fantasize forward about it is a massive foundational undertaking. Suffice it to say that it will lift the meaning of the first section of chapter 17 of *Insight* into a quite new context. *Haute vulgarization* is to be replaced, with statistical success, with a common

⁵*A Third Collection.*

⁶See the index, *For A New Political Economy*, under *leisure*.

sense of mystery, human living will reach new levels of privacy that is intimately global, and the mystery of human death will be a mystery of hope.

2. Conferring about Research and Communications⁷

It will take us a little work to glimpse better the meaning of the third - or even the second - definition of GEM. But that glimpse will come with hum-drum practical considerations on how the distant aspiration that are in those two definitions can help us towards a discontinuous shift in Lonergan studies and in our own work. As I have been envisaging it, and was going to envisage it here in the original essay, it is quite a fantastic yet obvious shift. It is a lift associated with the weak treatment in *Method in Theology* of the two specialties. Yet it is also related to the minimalism that I have been advocating for some time now, and to concrete possibilities and probabilities in what I might call our ordinary lives of marginal scholarship.

This latter minimalism and ordinariness is what the conference conferring is about. Indeed, such is my present minimalism that I do not wish to burden you with readings on previous efforts to say what specialized work in the first and last specialties is. I list some such readings in the last footnote and here and there as we ramble along together, but I do not ask you to follow up on them: I wish you only to follow up on simpler possibilities that come to you either from among those touched on by me here, or that dawn on you through the present nudging of your life.

Still, I presume that you have some notion of my minimalism. Quite simply, it advocates the division of labour advocated by Lonergan without its grounding: grounded rather in noticing the muddled presence of that division in contemporary

⁷The orientation is towards the initiation of these two specialties, but obviously is not restricted to them. Each of us has a bent towards one or two specialties, already perhaps identified, or waiting in our loneliness to be identified. And, of course, the conferring is a foundational search meshing into the tasks of the fourth and fifth specialties.

studies in all serious domains.⁸ Now, not only do I presume that you have some notion but I also wish to presume that you are taking sides about it, taking a stand on it. What stand do I desire? Here, oddly, I am stepping away from minimalism to the fantastic. At least, viewing current Lonergan studies, it could strike you as something in the realms of fantasy.

The fantastic minimalism stand is that what Lonergan suggests is something that could take over the globe, become the dominant ethos of all learning, its sharing, its implementation. This, after forty years of brooding, is not fantastic to me: indeed it was pretty evident to me in the late 1960s. But what is growing ever more evident to me as we move along in Lonergan studies these decades later is that Lonergan achievement has at best a place in scholars' minds as a convenient filing system for the individual. Nor do I see this placement as something they consider as a temporary strategy.

So, I am asking for a stand on this fantastic minimalism. I can, of course, have a shot at persuasion, and this in three basic ways that can be intertwined. There is the heavy way of dialectic about which I have written at some length⁹; there is the commonsense way that lurks in my appeal to history or my appeal by illustration from difficulties in various disciplines¹⁰, and there is the third way that consists in drawing attention to the manner in which the fantasy fulfils the conditions for cosmopolis set out by Lonergan.¹¹

Now if you are with me in this stand, even in a commonsense fashion, then we can proceed to envisage strategies that relate to commonsense versions of the specialties

⁸You would find helpful the reflections of chapter 3 of *Pastkeynes Pastmodern Economics: A Fresh Pragmatism* and of chapter 1 of *Method in Theology and Botany*.

⁹I refer especially to the SOFDAWARES and the *Quodlibets*.

¹⁰I refer you to the writings mentioned in note 8 above.

¹¹These are well worth brooding over in this context: give section 8.6 of *Insight* a fresh reading..

research and communications. This should, at first glance, seem odd to you: the specialties in their maturity require subtle differentiations of consciousness. How are we to manage the envisagement while operating in a commonsense mode?

We do so because we hang in with one of the facets of these specialties. We do research, but have no intention of going further: we are like lab attendants in physics, screen watchers on a warship, capable of handing on the baton by saying “hey: look at this!” Similarly, we do Communications but we are not leaning on the massively-developed cyclic support of the future: we are simply saying “hey, look at this!” But note the difference in the Hey-saying. The researcher is nudging those in the community of Lonergan students: the communicator is nudging the general community in particular zones.

But what commonsense helps you to notice what you say “hey” about? It is a business of layers, the identification of which is a task of our collaboration, but in my effort to get us into this task I would have us get thinking about the main characteristic of the commonsense bent that I have in mind, that I wish you to have in mind, in character.¹² It is the bent that wishes not only to see results, but to be the agent of some results.¹³

This may not seem much to ask, but in fact it asks much when viewed in its fullest sense.¹⁴ But lets not go there: think at present of a bubbling up of a commonsense ethos, say, in the midst of a conference on Lonergan, pushing the existential question, the molecules of the participants, towards the question of efficiency ...**Where is this**

¹²I think of character as defined in the beginning of the Aristotelian *Magna Moralia*, or the meaning of *character* as mentioned in section 1 of chapter 14 of *Method in Theology*.

¹³The final section of chapter 3 of *Method in Theology*, with its contextualization of effeteness, is relevant here and I would draw attention to the two comments (pp. 121, 155) on *haute vulgarization* in Lonergan’s *Collected Works*, vol. 6.

¹⁴The viewing is the distant reality pointed at e.g. in chapter 4 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*.

going?¹⁵ For instance, ‘Is this paper that I am listening to going to hit the streets?’. You find this, perhaps, an unfamiliar attitude? An unwelcome, disconcerting attitude? Even more so when the asking is ‘Where am I going with this? Is this leading me, us, anywhere as “a practical view of history?”’¹⁶

So we get closer to the mood of our involvement with withdrawal, a withdrawal that I would identify as contemplative, not a prayer of quiet, but an Augustinian “restless heart”, a Theresian adventure.¹⁷ And now, re-view the definitions of generalized empirical method in this light and notice new light, a new control of meaning.

But I wish to hold to brevity here. Where are we going with, in, from, this August gathering? Are we tuning to cherishing freshly, pragmatically, cunningly, the loneliness that is the heart of history? Are we ready, “ever ready,”¹⁸ to make Hey while the Son shines?

The Hey depends on where we are and stand in a common sense, with perhaps a tincture of theory, of our own participation of history’s loneliness? So, we must attend together to our opportunities to lift the ordinary of our quest into the rhythms of an extraordinary recycling of meaning that is yet to be, by taking note - Research - and

¹⁵The context of this question should eventually be the unity, beauty and efficiency of the new metaphysics that is serious about efficiency (see *Topics in Education*, 160, line 16) and about implementation as the core of the definition of metaphysics. God’s concept is an eternal practicality: see note 18 below.

¹⁶*Insight*, 233[258].

¹⁷In Joistings 4, on “Personality Types”, I reflect on the three Theresa’s of India, of Liseaux, of Avila. There are deep issues here of the character of contemplative reaching but the generic point is made in Cantower 21, “Epilodge”

¹⁸*Insight*, 726[747]. A matter, you might sense, of becoming a “specialized auxiliary” with “an effective determination to discover and to implement in all things the intelligibility of universal order that is God’s concept and choice.” God’s concept is the Son, shining in the darkness of today’s opportunity.

giving notice - Communications - of simple agonies of our classrooms, streets, conferences, collaborations.

Of what do we take note, and where do we take it? Of what do we give notice and to whom? What is your fancy? Certainly I have my own fancy, indeed a massive list of fancies that, in a broad sweep, were expressed in the remote doctrines of my last Cantower.¹⁹ But it seems better to await our interchanges before, during and after the August gathering.²⁰

¹⁹Cantower 41 dealt with the functional specialty Doctrines, but it also was the beginning of a new pragmatism that I saw as necessary: so, I ended the million word project after 400,000 words. The doctrines noted there are remote in meaning, but the present move is towards an intussusception of them within common sense. But I would wish that move to be a communal effort.

²⁰The communal effort of our gathering leads me to cut out of this essay my own lengthy listing of patterns of intervention in present fashions of conversations and classrooms and conventions. Still, you might find it useful to check out the pointers towards new twists on Research and Communications in *ChrISt in History*, which is on the Website, or in *Method in Theology and Botany*, which I can make available to anyone interested. But I suspect that we will find surprising the range and number of pragmatic interventions that are possible and probable in a genuine lift of Lonergan's meaning into contemporary highways, lowways, buyways, into the corridors of power and pedagogy.

APPENDIX

~ The Vancouver Lonergan Conference ~

Mon August 14- Fri August 18, 2006

At the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

This Vancouver Lonergan Conference has as topic

Lonergan's Functional Transposition of Research and Communications.

The broad title and interest of the conference is

"Effectively Detecting and Tackling Local Ills".

Presentations relating to Research and Communications are welcome. For such presentations a pre-written paper is not required. The objective is to seek out together the character of functional research and the strategies of functional communication. The significance of the word *functional* is that we try to attend to these operations as part of the cyclic process that would go through the other specialties. However, in this period of specialist immaturity reflections are expected to be loose, and this looseness is captured in the broader title.

There will be no formal reading of papers, and the formal meetings times are

limited to mornings, 10.30 to 12.30 and afternoons, 2.00 to 3.30. The rest of the time is a matter of informal groupings at meals [the Campus has a large variety of eateries] or in the evenings.

Evening question- or discussion- sessions are an option. There are both indoor and ocean facilities for swimming, in which context of course minding can also occur.

Topics already suggested include:

Ills of classroom performance in schools

The disoriented state of first year university texts.

The dominance of profit-making as an economic axiom.

Detecting and fostering childhood self- regard

Correcting flaws in self- attentive understanding

Research and Communication in the Study of Religious Dialogue²¹

²¹The Lonergan Newsletter for June 2006 has the following added details:
The Vancouver Lonergan Conference (August 14-18) of 2006 at the University of British Columbia has as topic Lonergan's functional transposition of Research and Communications. The broad title and interest of the conference is "Effectively Detecting and Tackling Local Ills". The first two days presentations are already settled: further proposals for presentations relating to Research and Communications are welcome. Day 1, Morning: McShane "Cosmopolis and the Longer Cycles of Incline"; Afternoon: Derek Bianchi Melchin "Cyclic Grounding of Christian-Muslim Dialogue". Day 2, Morning: Alessandra Drage "*Thinking Woman* and the Cycles of Third Stage Meaning"; Afternoon: Patrick Brown "Satisfactory Collaborative Law Cycles". The two articles mentioned in the Web-publications listings provide a context for the drive of the conference. For further information regarding the conference and accommodation at UBC contact pmschane@shaw.ca.

New entries on www.philipmcschane.ca have been limited to two articles relevant to the Vancouver Conference of August 2006. *Joisting 21*, "Research, Communications, Stages of Method" deals with three basic definitions of generalized empirical method. *Joistings 22*, "Mathews' *Lonergan's Quest* and Ours", lifts Mathews' work into the context of the later discovery of functional specialization, identifying Cosmopolis as grounding a fourth definition of generalized empirical method.